

Hunting

Hunting was a way of life for Indian men of northern New England. Even in southern parts of what is now New Hampshire, where growing seasons were long enough to sustain cultivation of the “three sisters” (corn, beans, and squash), hunting provided the main source of food during the winter and spring months. If hunting was poor, a family could starve.

Hunting was not a sport, but a challenging task requiring knowledge, skill, and strength. Using bows and arrows required great skill, for example, and chasing down game required stamina: a hunter might have to run after a deer for as many as twenty miles! Also Native American men would have to know their tribal hunting grounds thoroughly — every hill and stream and deer bed. It has been said that by looking at indicators a good hunter could tell not just that a deer had passed that way, but *which* deer had traveled through the area.

Indians believed that the world was filled with invisible spirits that lived in everything in nature. In “On Hunting,” Ken Mynter writes, “All life is sacred to us and we understand that we are only one small part of the life on this earth. We kill animals for food and we thank the spirit of that animal and our creator who sent it.” The Indians were never wasteful with their kill. They used every part of an animal. Skins could make moccasins, thongs, and clothing. Hair might be used for ornaments and embroidery, and fur for warm clothing. Bones could be used for knives, or hairpins, or needles. Antlers could become tools and arrow points; hooves could be rattles; claws could decorate belts and anklets or become rattles. Sinew or tendon could be used for thread or bowstrings or snares, and bladders or intestines could be made into bags and pouches.



Stalking Animals

Objective

To understand how Native American children learned to stalk animals and to develop good observational qualities.

Materials

None. Outdoor activity in woods or field.

Procedure

- Form a large circle. Select one student to stand in the center blindfolded and be the “listener.”
- On a signal from the teacher or leader, the children run in the same direction about the circle making as much noise as possible, rustling leaves and grass, etc.
- On the next signal to be silent, all runners “freeze” in their positions in the circle.
- The leader then points to one student in the circle to become the “stalker.” The student tries to sneak quietly up to the “listener” before the “listener” can point to the “stalker” making the sound.
- If the “stalker” can tag the “listener,” before the “listener” can point to him or her, the “stalker” becomes the new “listener.” If the “listener” catches the “stalker” first, the leader points to a new “stalker.” Keep exchanging roles.



Jacques Lemoyne de Morgues, 1591